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The Hon. Bette Stephenson, M.D.  
Minister

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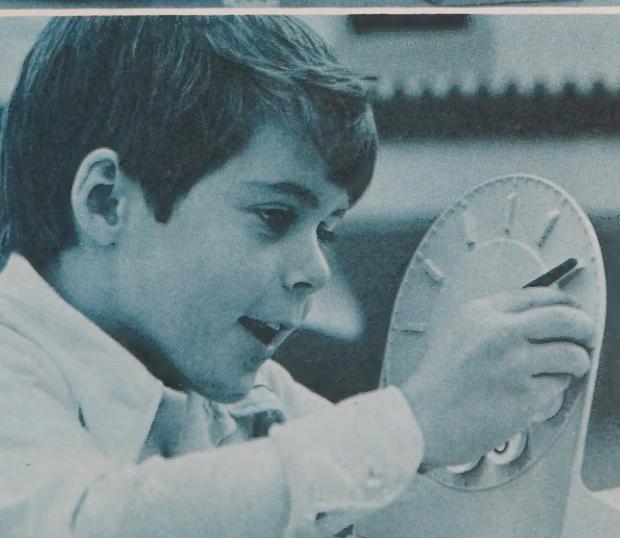
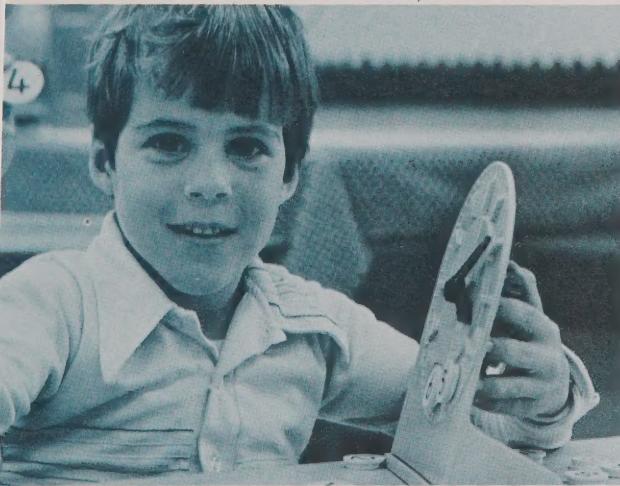
Curriculum Ideas for Teachers

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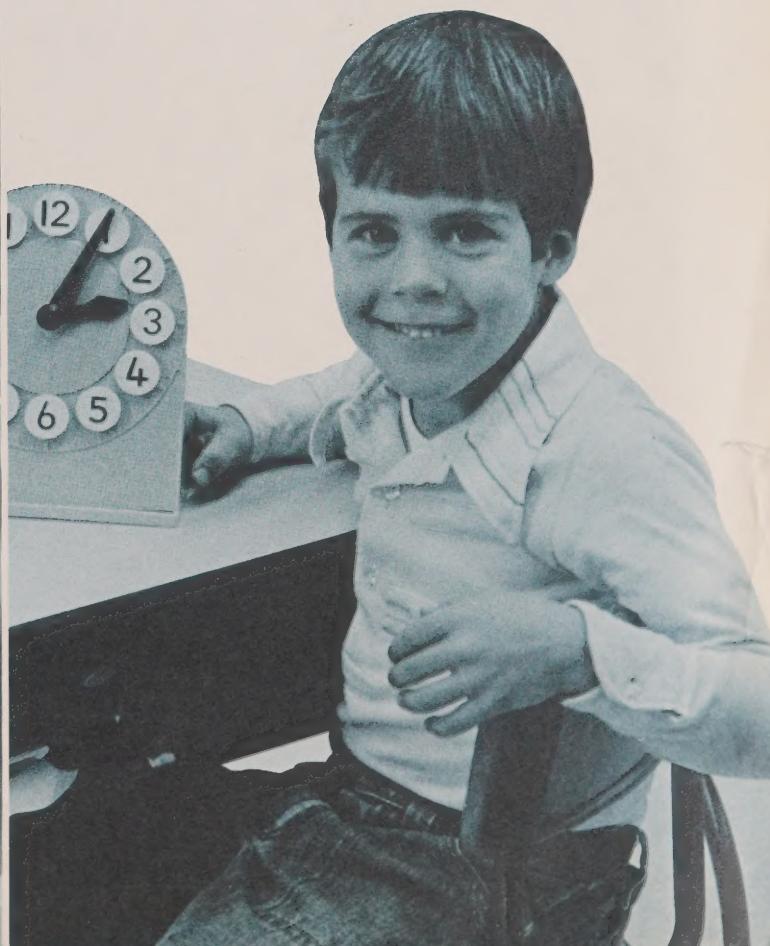
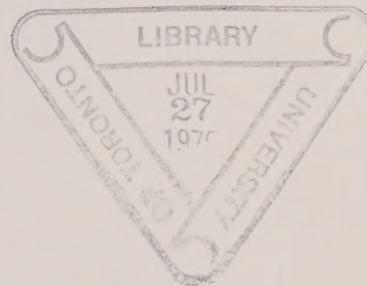
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Publications

# Children With Mild Intellectual Handicaps

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This document, one of a series dealing with exceptional children in the Primary and Junior divisions, suggests program modifications that will assist teachers to adapt the content and teaching strategies of *The Formative Years* to suit the individual needs of children who have mild intellectual handicaps.



## Introduction

### *Writing Committee*

Miss Irene Bettoli  
Education Officer  
Ministry of Education  
Toronto

Mrs. Léa Blake  
Co-ordinator of Special Education  
Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board  
Sudbury

Mr. Burton Borthwick  
Education Officer  
Ministry of Education  
Toronto

Miss Mernie Darnforth  
Teacher  
Strathcona Public School  
Halton County Board of Education  
Burlington

Mrs. Marguerite Martel  
Co-ordinator of Special Education  
Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board  
North Bay

Miss Jean Smith  
Teacher  
Heron Park School  
Ottawa Board of Education  
Ottawa

This document has been prepared to assist teachers in developing and implementing programs for pupils in regular classrooms or in special settings in the Primary and Junior divisions who are functioning below their age group. The objectives of these programs are the same as those listed in *The Formative Years*. There may be sufficient divergence from the norm in the intellectual, communicative, social, and/or emotional development of these pupils, however, to warrant curriculum modifications and special services in order to meet these objectives. Modifications of curriculum should allow the pupils to meet these objectives and to experience success and growth in self-esteem and self-confidence.

Careful observation by a sensitive teacher is vitally important in selecting strategies, resources, and activities that are appropriate to the needs of individual pupils.

Further suggestions concerning programs for pupils who have a mild intellectual handicap are outlined in the publications entitled "Curriculum Ideas for Teachers" that deal with learning disabilities, behavioural exceptionalities, communication exceptionalities, and reading.



## Who Are These Children?

The child with a mild intellectual handicap is one who, because of slow mental development, is unable to profit sufficiently from programs in regular classrooms. Most of these children are able to function independently in society and to learn some of the basic academic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The majority of these pupils will develop to the concrete stage of awareness and reasoning. Some will be able to function at semi-abstract levels of thinking.



## The Program

Most of these pupils require a modification of the regular school program and individual help from classroom teachers, support staff, or volunteers working under teacher guidance. Modifications made for the individual child may be considered in the light of the following factors:

- the child's rate of learning:
  - a) skills and concepts that the child has not grasped must be retaught;
  - b) concepts already learned may demand extra time for consolidation;
  - c) more time than usual may be required for the application of skills that the child has already learned before others are introduced;
- the child's style of learning:
  - a) visual clues should complement oral instruction;
  - b) written instructions should be read aloud;
- the learning materials to be used: concrete materials may be required for a much longer period of time with these children than with children who have normal patterns of learning;
- evaluation techniques: self-evaluation and peer appraisal are useful techniques. Both should be carefully monitored by a sensitive teacher. Evaluation by the teacher should maintain a balance between oral and written work. The Ministry of Education's publication *Evaluation of Student Achievement: A Resource Guide for Teachers* is recommended for further reading.

Individualized programs may require many teaching strategies, some of which will be devised in advance, while others will be adapted to suit the needs of the pupils. Such strategies include:

- open-ended questions and flexible lesson plans;
- group activities that take advantage of the children's strengths and that give the children a chance to participate in whatever way they can (poor readers might provide some illustrations for a report);
- a balancing of strengths, that is, pairing strong children with weak ones so that the combined strengths of each pair can be applied to a particular task;
- the use of outside or community help wherever specialized knowledge would further a particular classroom activity;
- the encouragement of pupil-planned activities.

Before planning an individualized program, a teacher must determine the pupil's strengths, weaknesses, and needs by:

- observation and recording of the child's skills;
- informal testing to determine the child's levels of functioning;
- formal testing to confirm or supplement the data already obtained;
- interviews with parents to obtain information and support.



## Considerations for Modified Programs

### Listening

Since language experiences begin with listening, it is imperative that the child be able to listen and interpret sound and speech accurately. The teacher must help the child to listen selectively and with interest, creating an environment that offers many opportunities for the child to explore a variety of sound and speech activities.

Skills	Suggested Activities
– comprehension of oral instructions	– Initially, give the child one simple instruction; then, increase the instructions gradually in number and complexity.
– discrimination of sounds – natural, produced by people, musical, and speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Make use of the child's experiences.</li> <li>– Explore sounds from the school and the neighbourhood, and record them on a tape recorder.</li> <li>– Use commercial recordings of music and environmental sounds.</li> <li>– Have the pupils produce their own sound stories (stories in which such sounds as the barking of dogs or the tooting of trains is prominent) for role-playing, drama, and puppetry.</li> <li>– Create rhythm patterns on musical instruments or with words, and have the pupils echo them.</li> <li>– Provide listening centres in libraries, resource centres, and classes where pupils can record stories and current events on filmstrips, slides, and tape.</li> </ul>
– expansion of oral vocabulary and language structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Create word games.</li> <li>– Have the pupils make lists of antonyms, homonyms, and synonyms that interest them.</li> </ul>
– understanding of stories and poetry that are read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use poems, stories, word games, charts, and picture cards at the pupils' level.</li> <li>– Have the pupils read simple stories to each other and discuss their content.</li> <li>– Have the pupils role-play the actions contained in the stories.</li> <li>– Use stories and poems written by pupils as much as possible.</li> <li>– Discuss the pupils' favourite radio and television programs with them.</li> </ul>
– increasing vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Allow for free and spontaneous interchange among pupils.</li> <li>– Provide and encourage collections of objects, pictures, photographs, and pets.</li> <li>– Have the children organize and categorize words with the same or similar meanings.</li> <li>– Suggest alternative words to those the children are using.</li> <li>– Guide the children's thinking from the specific to the general, from the concrete to the semi-abstract to the abstract.</li> <li>– Introduce words or expressions that define relationships, feelings, satisfaction, and enjoyment.</li> <li>– Use tape recorders for recording the children's personal experiences, stories, poems, reports, or for giving them directions.</li> </ul>

Skills	Suggested Activities
— developing ability in the construction of phrases and sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Use slides to develop a script or story.</li> <li>— Have the children paraphrase a story or poem that has been read aloud to them.</li> <li>— Have pupils interview members of the school staff and the community to prepare a “people bank”, a list of resource people that indicates the specialty and availability of each person.</li> <li>— Have the children prepare an oral report on an event or a favourite television program.</li> <li>— Record speech errors and teach correct forms of expression to the children individually and in groups.</li> <li>— Have pupils go on errands in the school.</li> <li>— Have children (in pairs) make announcements in other classes.</li> <li>— Give children practice in telephone conversation with fellow pupils, teachers, and the principal.</li> </ul>

### Reading

Reading can be an enjoyable and productive experience for most children who have a mild intellectual handicap. In working towards this end, teachers might consider the following suggestions:

- Programs should be based on a continual assessment of the level and approach adopted.
- Materials must be presented at the child's level of interest and understanding.
- Each child has his or her own learning style; the most appropriate method of instruction, therefore, must be determined for each child.
- Practice periods, games, and activities to reinforce learning should be brief.
- Children often learn well when they work in small groups and help one another.
- Children should be encouraged to read frequently and regularly for enjoyment and interest without being tested in any way.
- Materials such as low-vocabulary, high-interest books, simplified dictionaries, newspapers, and magazines are useful.
- Crossword puzzles and word bingo played individually or in small groups may be useful in developing word skills.
- Study units or topics that permit personal inquiry stimulate interest.
- The skills of looking for main points and for details, of inferring, and of comparing should be developed.
- Different reading materials — mathematics, health, poetry — require different techniques, vocabulary, and pace.



## Writing

The ability to use words well, with sensitivity and clarity, is an accomplishment that can be developed by pupils who have a mild intellectual handicap. Writing implies the transfer of mental or internal language to some format to be read or understood by others. Writing can be used to inform, explain, describe, narrate, persuade, argue, express feelings, and generate a response.

The purpose of writing should determine its form and the kind of language used. The children can learn the following skills through the accompanying activities:

Skills	Suggested Activities
– personal writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– writing notes, letters, stories, poems</li> <li>– writing descriptions of events</li> <li>– making collections of descriptive words, idioms, or phrases</li> </ul>
– formal writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– recording facts (addresses, distances, directions)</li> <li>– reporting simple research</li> <li>– making summaries</li> <li>– writing sequential instructions</li> <li>– writing reports of games</li> <li>– writing letters requesting permission</li> <li>– keeping diaries and log books</li> <li>– compiling recipes for a class cookbook</li> </ul>
– grammar, punctuation, and spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– changing tenses of verbs</li> <li>– using synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms</li> <li>– making changes in sentence structure</li> <li>– analysing the structure of known words to build new words</li> <li>– adding prefixes and suffixes to words</li> <li>– developing an awareness of punctuation through listening to oral reading in which stress, intonation, and pauses are emphasized</li> <li>– learning to indicate questioning, surprise, fear, or excitement through the use of punctuation marks</li> </ul>
– handwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– tracing, drawing, painting, modelling to improve eye-hand co-ordination</li> <li>– writing short letters or notes</li> <li>– using felt pens, crayons, and pencils</li> <li>– using large sheets of newsprint before proceeding to regular-sized paper</li> <li>– using the size of print or writing that is comfortable</li> <li>– having available and on display suitable models of letter formations</li> <li>– learning handwriting as an art form</li> </ul>

## Mathematics

The following are some of the important principles of teaching mathematics to the intellectually handicapped:

- Find the level at which the child can achieve success and have him or her proceed at his or her own pace.
- Present all materials in a simple, precise, and understandable manner.
- Give ample, individual help and attention.
- Use concrete materials as often as possible.
- Move in easy, single, systematic steps, repeating wherever necessary.
- Develop understanding, then accuracy, then speed.
- Provide motivation.
- Establish individual standards of quality.
- Guide the pupils in moving from the concrete to the abstract where essential.
- Be patient, understanding, and sincere.
- Teach and drill arithmetic fundamentals.
- Emphasize the development of problem-solving skills.

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Suggested Activities</b>
— use of numbers and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Have the children classify, order, and match such objects as blocks, rods, and patterns.</li> <li>— Proceed from rote to rational to serial counting. (<i>Rote</i> is imitative repetition; <i>rational</i> is the associating of a number name with a number of objects; <i>serial</i> is the counting of sensations — visual, auditory, muscular.)</li> <li>— Use concrete objects at hand in the initial stage of teaching.</li> <li>— Introduce the reading and writing of numbers. At first, the teacher writes on the chalkboard and the child in the air; later the child writes on the chalkboard, and finally on paper.</li> <li>— Introduce ordinal numbers by using concrete objects; e.g., sit in the second seat; bring the fourth book.</li> <li>— Develop the child's ability to recognize groups of persons or objects by using poems, flannel boards, blocks, games, or flash cards.</li> <li>— Provide the child with opportunities to gain an understanding of fractions by using apples and other objects that are readily available.</li> <li>— Use concrete objects.</li> <li>— Use semi-concrete, then abstract numbers.</li> <li>— Introduce “and” and “add”, “take away” and “subtract”.</li> <li>— Introduce vertical form and the importance of keeping columns straight.</li> </ul>

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– measurement

- Have the children measure desks, the classroom, other pupils' heights, materials for a playhouse, stores, pet cages.
- Have the children compare distances in the classroom, the school building, or the playground.
- Have the children measure a distance for jogging.
- Have the children measure the distance to the fire station, bakery, or dairy.
- Improve the children's concept of time by discussing the time when school begins, when recess begins, and the time elapsed from school opening until lunch. This will lead to an understanding of the hour, day, week, and year.
- Provide cups and metric jars for measuring liquids.
- Use the school scales to weigh children.
- Have the children observe the weighing of produce in a grocery store.
- Have the children count dozens and half-dozens of cookies, egg cartons.
- Discuss changes in temperature in degrees.
- Have the children learn money values through shopping trips, paying bus fares, buying refreshments for the class.
- Have the children make change and write cheques.
- Have the children deposit money into a class bank account that will be used for field trips.

– geometry

- Help the children recognize shapes in the environment: square, rectangle, circle, triangle, ring, box.
- Introduce one concept at a time through felt cutouts and drawings.
- Use a square box for play activities.



## Integration

In some subject areas, pupils in a special setting who have a mild intellectual handicap might work with children in regular programs. How frequently or how closely such integration is arranged would depend on:

- interest and motivation;
- the level of success required and possibly the availability of materials at the appropriate reading level;
- variations in note-keeping and evaluation techniques;
- the acceptance of these pupils by other pupils and teachers.



The following subjects are accompanied by suggestions that will facilitate the integration of students in their study:

### Environmental Studies

- Real situations can be used for study.
- Simplified reading materials in an interesting format can be read by the teacher or pupils.
- Pupils can be directed to the paragraph where answers will be found.
- The environmental studies class can be divided into segments, one of which will be a time for recording.
- Current issues can be discussed.
- The roles of people in current issues can be dramatized.
- The class can be divided into small groups to work on small segments of a task.
- The laws and rights of the community, province, or country can be discussed.
- Sections of the local newspaper can be used for study.

### Natural Science

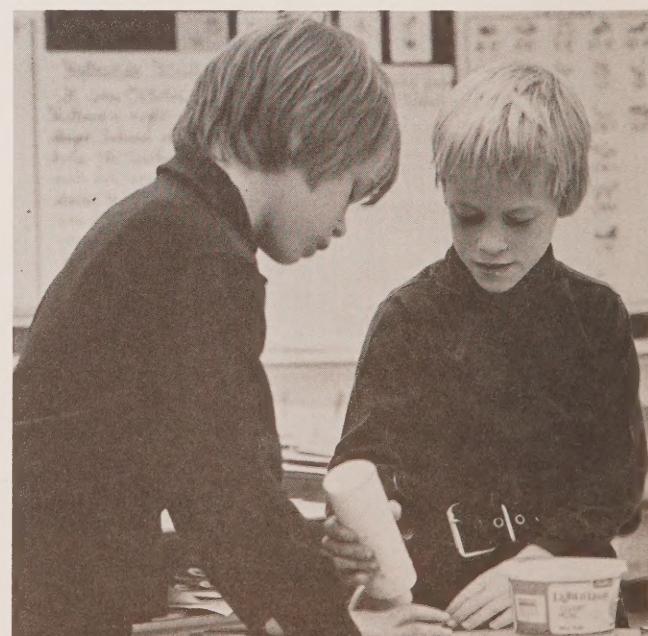
- The children can be helped to make daily observations of the weather, their own growth, and so on.
- Visits can be made to observe a planetarium, a farm, or a natural phenomenon.

### Music

- Simple action songs, seasonal songs, or camp songs can be part of the program.
- A variety of instruments and equipment can be provided for creating, performing, listening, and moving to music.
- Music of various types and sources can be used.
- Rhythm bands, instrumental ensembles, and singing can all form a part of the program.

### Visual Arts

- Children can touch, feel, or smell a variety of art materials.
- Children can express personal experiences and feelings through a variety of media — paint, clay, leather, crayon, pastel, wood, and fabric.



## When and How to Ask for Assistance

### Physical and Health Education

- Balls, hoops, and balance beams can be used.
- Both formal and creative dance can be included in the program.
- Climbing apparatus, trampolines, and obstacle races can be used.
- Rules for individual and group games should be carefully explained.
- Safety consciousness should be encouraged and demanded.
- Stories can be used as a basis for understanding moods and for coping with them.
- Children can work in groups occasionally in order to understand interdependence.
- Yoga routines and postures can be used.
- Nutritious snacks and meals can be made.
- Pupils can be taught good eating habits such as supplementing "junk bread" by the addition of peanut butter, bananas, and wheat germ.

The educable mentally handicapped child exhibits a rate of mental development that is slower than the rate of his or her chronological peers. In the early years of education, the child will likely demonstrate a weakness in his or her:

- retention of what is taught;
- reaction time — the period in which the child perceives and reacts;
- creativity — the production of spontaneous productive thinking;
- transfer of learning — the ability to apply in a fresh context something taught in the classroom or encountered outside the school.

Whenever a child appears to have difficulty with the educational program as well as in the areas listed above, the classroom teacher should:

- keep detailed records and samples of the pupil's work;
- contact the parents for additional information;
- inform the principal.

The school principal might ask for assistance from consultants, diagnosticians, or psychometrists.

The parents might request that their family physician forward an up-to-date health and physical evaluation to the school if there are any educational problems indicated.

When all relevant data have been assembled, the teacher in conjunction with the support staff, including the principal, special education staff, and central office personnel, should devise a program for the child that is geared to his or her level of development and individual learning style.



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